



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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ECF (Electronic Case Filing)

What is ECF?

ECF is an Internet-based document filing system. ECF enables registered users to **electronically file** (e-file) documents (in Adobe PDF format) with the Courts.

Is ECF a new system?

ECF is a component of CM/ECF (Case Management/Electronic Case Filing). The Clerk's Office for the U.S. District Court - District of Vermont has been using the CM component for case management since January 1, 2005. ECF was implemented October 2, 2006.

Who can file via ECF?

Attorneys admitted to practice in the District of Vermont as well as approved pro-se (non-incarcerated) parties are permitted to file documents via ECF.

Is a log-in and password required?

Yes. Please complete and submit by mail our [ECF Registration Form](#). Upon receipt, we will assign a log-in and password to you via e-mail.

Is there a fee?

No. There is no charge to register to use ECF or to file documents via ECF.

Is filing via ECF mandatory in the District of Vermont?

No. While ECF is mandatory in some districts, it is currently voluntary in the District of Vermont.

Once signed up for ECF, must I always file via ECF?

No. You may file one day via ECF and another day by traditional means. It's up to you. Note: please select one way or the other for a filing, e.g. if you e-file a motion, please e-file the related exhibits. Do not e-file a motion and submit related exhibits in hard copy to the Clerk's Office. Also, please note that if you e-file a document it is not necessary to send a "courtesy copy" / hard copy to the Clerk's Office.

What is a NEF?

A **NEF (Notice of Electronic Filing)** is an e-mail notice automatically generated by the ECF system at the time a document is filed. It serves as **service** of the document that was filed and is e-mailed **only** to parties who have specifically consented to receive service electronically. **Each NEF contains the following information:**

- Name of e-filer, date and time of filing;

- Case name;
- Case number (in the form of a hyperlink);
- Filer;
- Document number (sometimes in the form of a hyperlink – more info below);
- Docket text;
- Document description (Main Document, Certificate of Service, etc.);
- Electronic document stamp (security stamp);
- Names and e-mail addresses of the parties/attorneys receiving service via NEF; and
- Names and addresses of parties/attorneys receiving service via traditional means.

What is the purpose of the case hyperlink?

The **case hyperlink** provides you with a quick way to view the case. By clicking on the case hyperlink, you will be connected to the PACER side of the ECF/PACER system, prompted to enter your PACER log-in and password, and then brought directly to the case. Note: you will incur PACER charges for this view.

What is the purpose of the document number hyperlink?

The presence of a **document number hyperlink** indicates that an Adobe PDF image(s) is associated with the filing. When you click on the document number hyperlink, you will automatically receive “**One Free Look**” at the document(s) filed. You will not be asked to enter your PACER log-in and password. (More on “**One Free Look**” below.)

I’m clicking on the document number hyperlink but receiving an error message. Why?

There are a few exceptions to “One Free Look”: Documents filed in Social Security cases may be viewed only by parties registered to the case. Sealed documents are not available for viewing to anyone outside the Court. Although there are Adobe PDF images associated with these filings and, therefore, visible hyperlinks, clicking on the hyperlinks will trigger a “you do not have permission to view this document” message.

I’m not seeing a document number hyperlink. Shouldn’t there always be one?

While all attorney filings and e-filings must contain a document image, the Court sometimes files information that does not contain an Adobe PDF image. Examples: text-only Orders, minute entries for court proceedings, public utility events, etc. Since there is no image to view, the docket entry number does not appear in the form of a hyperlink.

What is “One Free Look”?

“One Free Look” refers to the functionality which allows a NEF recipient to view the underlying document and attachments once without logging into PACER and incurring viewing charges. The “One Free Look” document number hyperlink expires 15 days after the “filed date” of the document. Therefore, we advise that when taking your “One Free Look,” you save the document to your computer desktop or office network for future viewing. If you forget, don’t worry - you will still be able to view the document at any time in the future. The catch is that you’ll have to view it through PACER at a charge of \$.08 per page.

I just completed an e-filing and I see a notice that looks just like an NEF. What is this?

Upon submission of an e-filed document, the filer immediately sees a “Confirmation Notice” displayed on their screen. It contains the same information as a NEF, with one exception: the document number hyperlink does not allow “One Free Look” at the underlying document.

I need verification that my document was e-filed successfully. Should I retain the Confirmation Notice or the NEF that I receive in my e-mail in-box?

It is up to you. Both serve the purpose.

I do not wish to file via ECF but I want to begin receiving (or continue to receive) NEFs. Is this permitted?

Yes. Please submit an [ECF Registration Form](#). We realize that many attorneys may have submitted a similar form last year (entitled Electronic Notification Registration Form), however we must ask you to submit our new form due to a significant change in the consent requirement to electronic service of documents.

PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Documents)

What is PACER?

PACER, a component of ECF, allows the public and attorneys to view case information and documents. The PACER and ECF log-in screens are one in the same. If you want to query case information, enter your PACER log-in and password; if you want to electronically file a document, enter your ECF log-in and password.

Is a log-in and password required to use PACER?

Yes. Contact the Pacer Service Center (<http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov>) to register for a PACER account.

Is there a fee to register for a PACER account?

No. Registration for a PACER account is free.

Is there a fee to view docket sheets and documents via PACER?

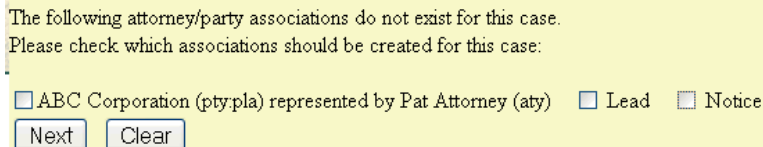
Yes. The fee is \$.08 per page that you choose to view, with a maximum charge of \$2.40 per document.

Using ECF to E-Filing Documents

ATTORNEY APPEARANCE and WITHDRAWAL

I'm entering a Notice of Attorney Appearance. What should I do when presented with the message "the following attorney/party associations do not exist for this case"? Which boxes should I check?

When this screen appears...



The following attorney/party associations do not exist for this case.
Please check which associations should be created for this case:

☐ ABC Corporation (pty:pla) represented by Pat Attorney (aty) ☐ Lead ☐ Notice

... boxes should be checked as follows:

Box on far left: Please be sure to check this box. It creates the association between the attorney/party and the case.

Lead box: This can be checked or left blank. If several attorneys are working together on the case and one would like to be designated as "lead," this is the way to make that designation.

Notice box: This one is important. Please check this box so ECF will list the attorney in the Mailing Info for the case. If the attorney is signed up to receive NEFs, the ECF system will list their name under "will receive service electronically." If they are not signed up to receive NEFs, the system will indicate that this attorney must receive notification by other means (hard copy).

Can I withdraw as counsel via ECF?

Yes. Counsel can seek permission to withdraw under "Motions" by selecting the Withdraw as Attorney event. (Please refer to (d) Withdrawal of Counsel on page 65 of our Local Rules for details.)

ATTORNEY E-SIGNATURES

What is the proper way to “e-sign” a document?

Please use this format:

By: /s/ James J. Jones, Esq.
James J. Jones, Esq.
Law Firm Name
Law Firm Address
Law Firm Phone

CASE INITIATING DOCUMENTS and DOCUMENTS WITH FEES

Can I e-file a Complaint and pay the fee via credit card?

No. The Court does not currently allow case initiating documents to be filed electronically.

Can I e-file a Pro Hac Vice Motion?

No. A fee is required so this must be filed by traditional means and docketed by Court staff.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE (COS)

Is it necessary to include a COS with my e-filing?

Yes. You must include a COS with your e-filing.

How do I determine which parties are signed up to receive service via Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) and which parties are not (will require service via traditional means)?

Go to Utilities > Mailings > Mailing Info for a Case. Enter the case number to determine which parties have consented to receive service electronically (ECF will generate a NEF **to/for** them) and which parties have not. You must provide service via traditional means **to/for** the non-NEF parties.

Is there a suggested COS format I can follow?

Yes. [Click here to view our suggested Certificate of Service format.](#)

COVER LETTERS/CORRESPONDENCE

Should I include a cover letter with my e-filing?

No. Cover letters should not accompany your e-filing.

Can I file attorney correspondence?

No. Attorney correspondence - including letters - should not be e-filed.

DISCOVERY

What is the difference between a Discovery Certificate and a Certificate of Service?

A Discovery Certificate is essentially a Certificate of Service for discovery materials. If you have exchanged discovery material, please e-file a Discovery Certificate. If it is material not related to discovery, please e-file a Certificate of Service.

Should I e-file or mail copies of discovery material to the Clerk's Office?

No. The Court should only receive the discovery certificate.

DOCUMENT (PDF) SIZE

Approximately how many pages can I scan and save to a PDF before I reach the 3 MB size limit?

We suggest scanning about 20 pages and checking (under Properties) the document size.

Approximately how many pages can I type in Word or WordPerfect and then save to a PDF before I reach the 3 MB size limit?

Approximately 200 pages of text typed in a Word or WordPerfect document should save to a PDF that is under 3MB in size.

I have a 60-page document to be attached as Exhibit A. I scanned it and the size is 6 MB. How can I e-file this?

Divide the 6 MB PDF into two PDFs that are 3 MB each. This can be done by rescanning the document in two pieces (first scan pages 1-29, then scan pages 30-60) or by copying the PDF and then deleting pages.

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

Should I e-file a Memorandum in Support as its own entry or as an attachment to the main document (Motion) entry?

Local Rule 7.1 (a)(2) states: "All written motions, other than those presented during trial, must be accompanied by or contain a memorandum of law containing a concise statement of the legal contentions and authorities relied on in support of the motion. A copy of each motion and memorandum must be served on all opposing parties." The Memorandum in Support should be e-filed as an attachment to the main document Motion. To name it, click on the Category drop-down and Select Memorandum in Support.

NAMING ATTACHMENTS

Should I select "Text of Proposed Order" from the Category drop-down and type the exact title in the Description free-text window?

No. It is not necessary to type a detailed description or title. Simply select **Text of Proposed Order** from the **Category** drop-down list:

I want to e-file "Exhibit A" and it consists of two PDF images. How should I name them?

In Step 2 of Naming an Attachment, first select **Exhibit** from the **Category** drop-down. Then, in the **Description** free-text window, type "**A (1 of 2).**" Repeat the Add Attachment process. Again, select **Exhibit** from the **Category** drop-down, and in the **Description** free-text window, type "**A (2 of 2).**"

SEALED DOCUMENTS

Can I e-file a SEALED document?

No. Sealed documents cannot be e-filed. **Sealed documents must be docketed by Court staff only.** Please remember that to request a document be filed under seal, a Motion to Seal the document must be filed first.

What if I want the Motion to Seal a Document (itself) to be SEALED?

Again, any document that is to be sealed must be filed via traditional means by Court staff only. Please submit your sealed Motion to Seal to the Clerk's Office in hard copy.

ODDS & ENDS

What is a text-only Order? Why don't I see a hyperlink to a PDF image?

Text-only Orders, issued by Chambers, consist of **docket text only**. There is no image, and therefore, no hyperlink to a PDF.

What is the quickest way to query a case in PACER?

Let's say you'd like to look up case **2:05-cr-00036 wks**

Simply type **5-36** in the Case Number search window.

If there are multiple cases from 2005 with the number 36, you'll see this:

- ☐ 2:05-cr-00036-wks - USA v. Corbitt
- ☐ 1:05-cv-00036-jgm - USA v. Purinton et al
- ☐ 2:05-mc-00036 - USA v. Polestar Capital Corp
- ☐ 2:05-mj-00036-jjn - USA v. Berg

Check the first box to view the criminal case, **2:05-cr-00036 wks**.

What do the other numbers and letters in case titles refer to?

1 = Location code (administrative purposes)

2 = Location code (administrative purposes)

cr = criminal

cv = civil

mc = miscellaneous

mj = magistrate

initials = presiding judge – referral judge

Is a comprehensive listing of all Civil and Criminal e-filing “events” available?

Yes. Please refer to [Civil Events At-A-Glance](#) and [Criminal Events At-A-Glance](#). These overviews are updated occasionally, as new events are added to ECF.